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THOMAS MORAN WATERCOLORS ON VIEW AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

"The Most Remarkable Scenery:" Thomas Moran's Watercolors of the American West, an exhibition that chronicles the western travels of the painter Thomas Moran (1837-1926), opens at The Cleveland Museum of Art August 5 and will be on view through October 5, 1980. The over 80 watercolor field sketches and finished watercolors in the exhibition were painted by Moran while he participated in several major geological expeditions and visits to western sites such as the now Yellowstone and Yosemite national parks, the canyons of the Colorado and Rio Virgin Rivers, the Grand Tetons, the Green River, and Pike's Peak.

This "most remarkable scenery" of America's western geography, as the Rocky Mountain News described it in 1873, inspired the magnificent watercolor field sketches and deeply dramatic finished landscaped paintings which Moran completed during nearly two decades of travel in the West.

Two watercolors from the Prints and Drawings Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art (Smelting Works at Denver and The Ruby Range, Nevada) are included among works in the exhibition on loan from 46 public and private collections in the United States and Great Britain.

Thomas Moran's first western journey to the Yellowstone had a profound effect on his style, his choice of subject, and his career. He later wrote, "the impression then made upon me by the stupendous and remarkable manifestations of nature's forces will remain with me as long as memory lasts." Thomas Moran made this journey in 1871 at the age of thirty-four as guest artist with the first official exploration of the Yellowstone country, the Geological Survey of the Territories under Dr. F. V. Hayden.

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During the next 20 years he visited the lands west of the Mississippi on eight additional occasions. He believed that the elements of nature reflected spiritual truths and that the painting of mountain scenery was the highest attainment for the artist.

Although Moran had little prior experience in "roughing it," he adjusted quickly to the rigors of expedition life. He was well liked by his expedition friends who came to call him "T. Yellowstone Moran." He later designed a monogram incorporating the letter "Y" into his initials.

Moran's expedition field sketches and finished watercolors became an important record of the previously unrecorded grandeur of the Yellowstone area. Moran worked closely with the expedition's photographer, William Henry Jackson, often suggesting the views and compositional elements which Jackson photographed. Moran used his sketches and watercolors along with Jackson's photographs as notes for his large oil paintings. While Moran painted at the same time that the first photographs of Yellowstone were being made, his work supplied the magnificent colors which the photography of the time could not reproduce.

Moran's extraordinary watercolors from this trip, along with Jackson's photographs, convinced Congress to declare the Yellowstone region a National Park area in 1872.

Carol Clark, curator of paintings at the Amon Carter Museum in Ft. Worth, Texas, organized the exhibition. Mrs. Clark participated in the Joint Art History and Museum Studies Program of The Cleveland Museum of Art and Case Western Reserve University. "The Most Remarkable Scenery:" Thomas Moran's Watercolors of the American West, which originated at the Amon Carter Museum, is the first exhibition to emerge from that program.

Following its Cleveland showing, the exhibition travels to the Yale University Art Gallery.

The first thorough catalog of Moran's watercolors of the American West written by Mrs. Clark and published by the University of Texas Press will be available at the Museum sales desk (\$17.00).

Mrs. Clark will give a special guest lecture, Thomas Moran's Watercolors of the American West, on Sunday, September 21, at 3:30 p.m., in Gartner Auditorium at the Museum. In addition, gallery talks on the exhibition offered by Marianne Doezema, assistant curator of Art History and Education at The Cleveland Museum of Art, are scheduled for Wednesday, September 24, and Sunday, September 28, at 1:30 p.m. in the Prints and Drawings gallery.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.